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Lakemba

LAND AND PROPERTY

423 Title of land is a very delicate subject, consequently my information is scanty and unsystematic. Land which was once freely given away, has now become most valuable on account of the price of copra. To put an end to the quarrels that arose out of land, the Government appointed a Lands Commission to settle the claims. But the method of public inquiry so well adapted to the outspoken British temperament, is quite unsuited to a people who will on no account contradict a chief or a person of quality, and whose great weakness, as they themselves acknowledge, is "Fijian shame" (*mandua vakaviti*), an unconquerable aversion to haggling, disputing, or of saying no to a kinsman.

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423 614 The lands in the valleys (*soso*) are held in common by the clan; any member of the clan can plant in clan lands without leave, but a stranger may not.

The lands on the coast formerly belonged to the "sides of the oven." The rents on certain leases are still paid to the "side of the oven." In the reign of Taliai Tupou, Maafu the Tongan, who virtually ruled Lau, divided the land individually among all the adults; those who were children at the time received no land, so they shared that of the father or brother. The eldest controls (*leuva*) the land, arranging about the planting, deciding where each brother should have his garden, and directing the work. Land is held in common also by more distant kinsmen, but under the control of one man.

It is not true then to say that there is individual ownership of property in Lau. The only result of the division has been that the land instead of being held in common by the clan, is now held in common by groups each representing descendants of one who was adult at the time of the division.

It is vain to look for definite rules of succession or any other acquirement of land. A clan forms one vast family where land matters are "discussed as between kinsmen"; and there is much begging, and conceding. It often happens that a man cannot tell why a certain man holds a piece of land, because it is a private arrangement. Nor can they always say what will become of the land after the owner's death.

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Adopted children do not inherit land unless there are no offspring. The heirs may, however, decide to let the adopted child get land.

423 562 Women do not own land. The son-in-law of the only survivor of Tuware had to bring presents to his father-in-law in order to have permission to take his land. The head of a clan held that it would be right for him to provide land for a spinster or the wife of a man of another clan if she were a widow, for widows return to their clan. Women can, however, get land by

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arrangement. Thus Taraivosa got the land of her father, Mburua of Natokatoka, for her son; Mburua on his death had given it to one Tokai of Vatuwangga; when Tokai died it passed to Rasolo, also of Vatuwangga, who was "brother" to Tokai; Taraivosa begged the land for her son, and Rasolo promised to give it as soon as her son began to pay taxes.

A man gets land through his mother, if he comes to live with his mother's people.

Though in some cases it looks at first sight as though land had passed out of the clan, this does not actually happen. Thus Joshua and his people lived on land which his father had begged from Lemaki, the hereditary carpenter; but Lemaki holds land from the nobles only so long as he lives in Lakemba. Tiope of the clan of Ndaulakemba in Levuka held the land of Osea of the clan of Manukuira, because they had lived together, and Tiope was working off Osea's debts; nevertheless the land was spoken of as belonging to Osea's son, a boy of about thirteen.

If a member of the clan dies without issue his land reverts to his "edge of the oven." Ratu Finau however had all the edges of the oven put down as one in the Lands Enquiry so that now the land reverts to Katumbalevu as a whole.

It was definitely laid down that land could not go out of the clan except as *wa ni kuna*, the strangling rope, *ka ni mbula*, the price of life, or as *i thoithoi ni ndraundrau*, the wherewithal to pluck leaves for plates. The strangling rope is land given to kinsmen of a deceased nobleman's wife for strangling her at his death. The price of life is land given by a man to one who has saved his life. The wherewithal to pluck leaves is land given away as a woman's dowry; the land is supposed to keep her supplied with banana and breadfruit leaves on which to place the food. Such land is also called *i kaukau ni alewa* (that which is brought with a woman).

It was indeed said that a lady marrying a "small man" would also bring a dowry, and I know of one such case where the father of a lady of Naivi gave some land when she married a man of Levuka; the land is now held by the man's son. But this does not appear to be a common practice, for I was told that the reason why a lady does not bring land to the "landsmen" is that her people have no land to give. The Chief of Nasangalau says the same of his village: the nobles there had no land but what they got from other clans through their mothers.

A nobleman will sometimes perform what is called *vakalutulutu*, causing to fall; this is a present of manufactured articles to his son's maternal uncles, in order to "make the land fall"—that is, to get land for his son. Meli, the head of Naivi, thus got land from his mother's clan, Tumbou;

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764 sand into the grave; earth was thrown on the top and the whole was trampled down. The head should be turned to the east.

The word for grave is *mara;* the chiefly word is *sautambu,* holy chief; no lowborn fellow comes near a *sautambu.*

If a man is buried on the day he died, the burial feast (*mangiti ni veimbulu*) is held after the funeral. If he is buried the next day, this feast is merged in the death feast called *i mburua.* At Ratu Isoa's burial feast a pig was killed. All those who attend the funeral get a share, even distant kinsmen may attend.

766 565 562 In the old days the body of a nobleman would lie in the house, it might be a whole month; the people of Narewandamu and Tandravula would remain there in spite of the stench. Ratu Erone's body was kept a month in a coffin waiting for the Governor, and the conches blew all that time without cease. Of old strangers did not during that time go about for fear of being killed "to follow the breath" (*muri thengu*) of the deceased. On the day of the burial three to five of the nobleman's widows were strangled to strew the pit (*me i thoni ni lua*); a bark cloth was passed round their necks and a man tugged at either end. Even Randi Naiau might thus be strangled. The widows sometimes went to their respective clans and asked for death (*kere mate*): "I come that I may be earth for Tui Naiau" (*nggele kei Tui Naiau*). Her brothers would tell her to go and bathe, after which they strangled her either at home or at Great House. If a woman was a stranger there was no one to dispose of her; only her people might strangle her. If Tui Tumbou had a sister married to Tui Naiau, he would direct that she be strangled, an order that was carried out whether or not the woman was willing. A piece of land, generally taro land, was then given to her kinsfolk as a return; this land was called the strangling rope (*wa ni kuna*). Sometimes when a widow was about to be strangled, the sons of the deceased nobleman would prevent it and take some of them to be their wives. The strangled wives were laid at the bottom of the grave and the nobleman on the top. The custom was not confined to the nobles: the wife of a Vakavanua, two generations ago, was strangled at his death. Surviving widows were called *i loloku;* they shaved their heads, cut off a little finger and were sacred (*tambu lako*).

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766 In olden days the clan of Valelailai dragged the nobleman's body to the grave on a crate, lowered it, and folded mats over the body. They received gifts which were made at the burial, also a part of the feast.

765 Either after the burial or when the mourning is over the kissing gifts are distributed among the relatives of the dead (*weka ni putu*) who brought bundles of mats.

The next feast for the dead (*i mburua*) is the largest of feasts, usually held a day or two after the burial. The death feast of one leading nobleman

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both of whom lived in the house next to his paternal grandparents.

Soon the child recognizes in his father the most important person in the household. He is a little afraid of him and begins to respect him. He learns not to touch or take anything pertaining to the person of his father—his mat, pillow, comb, or *lavalava*. He knows that if he, his brothers and sisters, or his mother disobey his father they will be scolded, perhaps whipped. At the same time he admires his father and is delighted by any attention from him. He calls him by the pet name, *tata*. His father does not play with him often, but occasionally he takes the child on his back to attend a meeting or to visit a neighbor.

Up to this time there has been little or no distinction between a boy and a girl. Both have been equally welcomed into the community, feted, nursed, and petted. Now a sex distinction becomes apparent. As the little boy grows older he is more frequently seen in the company of his father than is his sister. Occasionally he is taken on his father's back to the garden, while the little girl remains in the village with the women. Within the father-child relationship pattern there is considerable individual variation. Some fathers show a great deal of affection toward their children. The headman of Undu village played with his small offspring of both sexes often, and was rarely seen about the village without one or two babies on his back or on his lap. Some fathers are very much attached to their first born sons. The jealous antagonism, which later becomes marked between father and grown son, is not apparent when the boy is a child. The child treats his uncles in much the same way as he treats his father. His "big" fathers (the father's older brother and the mother's older brother) are honored more than the rest.

The child's attitude of increasing respect toward his father contrasts with his attitude of familiarity toward his mother. Although no longer physically dependent upon her, he con-

3:Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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593 tinues to play with her and with her personal property. His
854 mother's subordinate position to her husband and the adult
562 males in the household reinforces this behavior pattern, as does also the general status of women in the community. The mother continues to be lenient toward him unless she is in a bad mood, when she is likely to fly into a rage at a trifle.

855 One day while talking to Kama in my house at Tokalau,
603 we were interrupted by the screams of his three-year-old
593 granddaughter. Pursued by Lute, her mother, who carried a stick, the terrified child was running in the direction of my house. Lute, six months pregnant, was walking with a determined stride and gaining ground. Kama called to his granddaughter to come to him but not hearing him, she turned and ran around the next house. He left my house, and, calling the child by name, walked toward the pair who had now rounded the house and were again approaching. This time the child noticed him and ran to him. When Lute caught up with them Kama calmly and resolutely raised his hand and slapped Lute's face. She turned and walked away and he, comforting the child, brought her back with him to my house.

855 On another occasion I heard the screams of a child issuing from a neighboring kitchen house. A woman in a tantrum was whipping a child with a stick. She stopped until his screams abated, then whipped him again. This was repeated with morbid viciousness three or four times until a relative snatched the child away.

However, a child is not whipped often. If he takes forbidden property or fails to show respect where it is due he is scolded or slapped. If he is bubbling his lips the mother will
[863] remove his hand or slap him for it. He is not allowed to defecate in the house, but if he does so on the house platform or in front of the house, he is usually ignored. Gradually he learns to go to the beach or the bush. Infants sleep on baby mats, which are washed and sunned rather frequently. One